

**Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder**

“The National Parks in the Pacific Northwest”

**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform**

September 12, 2005

Good morning, and thank you for joining us today. This is the fourth in a series of hearings on the critical issues facing the National Park Service. I would like to also welcome all of my fellow Members of Congress who care about the National Parks, and who have joined me here today.

As I have said at many hearings, the National Parks are unique in the world. Many countries have National Parks and have preserved their historic sites. No other country, however, has developed the same kind of park system – with such a diversity and breadth and distinctiveness – as our system. Moreover, each park is unique unto itself. The majesty of Mt. Rainier is different than the breathtaking volcanoes of Hawaii which are different than the historically and emotionally significant sites of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Although each site is an exceptional example of history and natural beauty, all park service units share one unfortunate commonality: funding pressure.

As operations and maintenance, for example, demand more and more of the park service budget, the quality of the Park Service is sure to deteriorate. In many areas, we have already seen a decrease in hours of operation, the decline of services, and the deterioration of facilities. The pressure on the Park Service affects its ability to conserve and protect the environment, provide recreational opportunities, and educate the public.

The parks of the Pacific Northwest contain some of the most magnificent vistas, prime hiking and mountain climbing opportunities, and ecologically diverse zones in the Park Service. If these parks are to remain, we must examine the parks of this region, discuss their situations, and work to provide solutions so that future generations can enjoy what we have today.

I am pleased to be joined today by several Members of Congress, all of whom have a deep and abiding love of the parks and the Park Service. First, Congressman Brian Baird joins us today. He and I co-chair the National Parks Caucus in the House. He also was instrumental in the creation of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

I would also like to welcome Congressmen Jay Inslee, Dave Reichert, and Rick Larsen. These gentlemen have demonstrated their commitment to the National Parks not only by their presence here today, but also through their efforts in Congress to make a better Park Service.

I would also like to welcome our witnesses. Our first panel consists of Cicely Muldoon, Deputy Regional Director for Public Use, Pacific West Region. Director Muldoon will be testifying on behalf of the Park Service. She will be joined during the question period by Dave Ueberuaga, Superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park, Bill Laitner, Superintendent, Olympic National Park, and William Palleck, Superintendent, North Cascades National Park.

Our second panel will be Sally Jewell, Trustee of the National Parks Conservation Association, Russ Dickenson, Former Director of National Park Service from 1980-1985, and Rod Fleck, City Attorney/Planner of Forks, Washington. Welcome to you all.